

# *The* **PROVIDENCE POST**

More Evidence in the Streets



Residents and By Beck Road 19 Artists, September 2019

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Beck Road's residents were first recorded in 1901. 112 dwellings housed artisan workers and families – carvers, dressmakers, bookkeepers, blacksmiths, cabinetmakers and clerks. For 70 turbulent years industry, poverty, a chemical

factory, slum housing, war, extreme hardship and deprivation rose and fell around Beck Road. It never took a bomb, but several houses were abandoned until artists came to live and work alongside people born there.



## Introduction



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Many Beck Road residents resisted demolition orders in the 1980s and ACME and several trustees led a heroic campaign to purchase some houses for artists in 1988. In 1984 an international gallery started and resident artists held several Open Studios from 1989 to 2004. An artist-run space at No. 53 presented 18 shows from 2013 to 2018.

On 7 September 2019 current residents and the artists and exhibition makers of *By Beck Road 19* were photographed by Edward Woodman in Beck Road. Several had previously been photographed there in November 1987 when Mr. Woodman used the same Hasselblad 500cm camera.

## ARE WE ALL FOR AN ART?

***By Beck Road 19* proves that art is an irresistible and resilient human need**

Those who say it is pointless (elite, luxurious, effete, futile — the variations are endless) need only walk 167 metres and note the semiotics of occupation for 128 years. Beck Road has housed creative people since the first census in 1901 and is a dazzling and joyful reminder that art and humans are intertwined.

The density of both in a single street is breathtaking. Work by 79 invited artists is currently on exhibition in the 317m long Cordiere (the Arsenale) in the 2019 Venice Biennale's main

show *May You Live In Interesting Times*. That's one artist every 4.01 metres.

*By Beck Road* averages an artist every 3.6 metres in the street.

After requesting proposals in mid-June in a letterbox drop, the curators were thunderstruck. Ten artists had been programmed and an open call was not expected to deliver many more. At press time, work by 49 artists was challenging curators to ask for more front rooms.

Beck Road artists began exhibiting individually at home in the 1970s and collaborated several times to present Open Studios en masse. *By Beck Road* revives that habit and pays tribute to Maureen Paley whose gallery 'Interim Art' presented brave and important exhibitions from 1984 – 1998.

Ms Paley's second show in June '84 was an entire gallery *tour de force* by Hannah Collins titled: *Evidence in the Streets – War Damage Volumes* and was collected in part by the V&A.

It was impractical to re-present this work, but the title prompted an examination of evidence from one great street about the condition of art in 2019.

Beck Road artists make art all the time. The presence of an audience (or not); a representative gallerist (or not); a community of artists (or not), are not essential for art to exist.

**“The presence of an audience (or not); a representative gallerist (or not); a community of artists (or not), are not essential for art to exist.”**

But of course these things nourish artists. Which is why the entire street is making this exhibition. Residents are giving up their homes for art. Cars are making way for art (ironically for an art car showroom) and houses will be name tagged to show they were occupied by artisans and workers when they were built.

The environment now has risks that could lead to mass extinction. Were it not for *By Beck Road 19*, few of these excellent artists would be exhibiting this year. The only artist represented by a commercial gallery is long deceased. And the artists working in railway arch studios are so out of sight they were barely known to anyone before June.

The arches are being monetised by private equity interests who now own them nationwide, and if Beck Road's artists are priced out, the ecology will collapse.

Studios need protection and Hackney needs artist-run exhibition spaces desperately. The exhibition of *By Beck Road* is 19 hours. One artist has waited for 30 years to show.

**We are all for an art \ Art Art Art Art Art Art Art Art Art Art Is anyone else?**

*Words by Alastair Carruthers*



## From our Readers

Opening your door to the public during the Open House London Weekend is a subversive act. Allowing others to see what only you usually see; granting permission instead of denying; welcoming strangers into your home, your workplace, wherever. Anyone who does this is working hard for London, changing how it feels, how it is perceived, bolstering its reputation as a place where everyone can feel they belong. The residents of Beck Road however, have taken this ethos even further. Their *By Beck Road* event, which showcases art created on the street down the ages (much of it by significant artists), in essence turns their street and homes into public art galleries. This kind of gesture inspires a kind of 'sociality' – where people, no matter how well known to each other, do things together, willingly. Given the ugly politics that form the backdrop to our lives today, this endeavour feels vital. Kind. The opposite of 'NO'. Wouldn't it be incredible if residents of other streets were similarly inspired? To quote Charles Dickens and Oliver Twist, "Please sir, I want some more."

**Rory Olcayto, Open House director**

For me Beck Road is a chance for a home in a unique and diverse street with a sense of community, located in an East London city 'village' with local shops – butcher, baker, doctor, bookstore, cafes, market – and a park all within easy walking distance.

It is a chance to have neighbours who know and care about each other, to make friends and socialise, to get involved in local community activities and to make a contribution to a better city life for all of us.

*By Beck Road 19*

This event is a journey of discovery in the company of kindred souls about:

- the history of our street and the original eclectic inhabitants,
- the past artists who have lived and worked here,
- the many present artists who live and work here,
- and the many talented and generous individuals who live in our street now.

It is amazing and heart-warming to see so many people working together and giving freely their time, skills and interests to pull together to create a unique art, heritage and social event in Beck Road.

**Kathryn Lovering, Chair of Beck Road Residents' Association and recent resident**

I have so many memories of my 18 and a half years in Beck Road. Initially it was a great opportunity

to have space to live and work at an affordable rent, but of course it became a great deal more than that over the years. From that base I was able to develop a career and a support system for life and work. The support and pleasure of some really good friends in the street made such a difference to my life. Times of laughter and celebration as well as times of tears – the sadness of losing friends to unexpected tragic deaths, but the rallying round those left behind was a wonderful lesson in just being with people. Being part of a community of artists taught me a great deal and opened my eyes to undreamed of possibilities, inspired by the practice of other artists in the street. It was an exciting and rich time in my life; only the shocking and unexpected events in my personal life caused me to leave.

**Deborah Duffin, Artist and former resident**

Beck Road means the opportunity to build and grow my artistry in a place that is rich in creative history. I believe it is already informing my work and my decisions as an artist and I can only hope that I will go from being an emerging artist to a working artist, building connections and collaboration with my peers.

**Tiffany Lambert, Studio Artist**

Beck Road was at first a source of income from my job at Diddy's, a job I took up in order to subsidise my practice. Since then it's also been a location for an installation, somewhere I've made friends, found a housemate, advocates of my art and I've got to know a proper neighbourhood street.

**Eve Shillingford, Artist**

I spent over half my adult life living and working in Beck Road. It's where I established my practice, and where I brought up my family. There are so many memories. I love the fact that the street continues to evolve and thrive as a community.

**Mikey Cuddihy, Artist and former resident**

Beck Road means community, potential, collective, home, studio.

**Jenny Baines, Current resident**

Beck Road means a great deal. A lot of work. Family. Friends. Home.

**Pete Smith, Artist resident**

## Features



© Leanne Finn-Davis

## RADICALISM AND REFUGE

Hackney has had a reputation for radicalism and refuge since the arrival of religious dissenters in the mid 17th century. Booted out of London and forbidden to set foot within a five miles radius of its city walls, a swathe of freedom fighters, opponents to the state rule of church, made their way from the city, along Mare Street, to the open arms of a sympathetic parish vicar at St John at Hackney. Here they took refuge in what was then a rural village in the County of Middlesex.

Private houses in Hackney were used as secret meeting places for worship and for discussion. By the early 18th century Nonconformist churches and schools were beginning to be built. Often quietly funded by wealthy liberal-minded London merchants the new churches held anti-establishment views on governance, taking the form of respectful cooperation and inclusivity. The non-hierarchical Congregationalist and Baptist churches governed themselves entirely collaboratively, while Presbyterian churches were looked after by a representative assembly of elders. Methodist churches on the other hand focused their egalitarian views by bringing their message to those previously left on the edges of organised religion, to criminals and the poor, with their ideals being known as the Social Gospel.



## Feature



# BECOMING BECK ROAD

## A mystical history

*Pieces of land draw us in; they have their very own energy. Ground informs what can be done, what can live, and what cannot. As marks and scents are left on a very particular patch, signals are made to others that they are all right to be here too.*

We are not in charge. We are governed by the essence and purpose that the land has for us.

Intrigued by an 1870 map of the area in Hackney, known as London Fields, a journey began to discover some of the story of Providence House. Facing Mare Street and taking up the space of what are now numbers 2, 4 and 6 Beck Road, this large family home had an inviting curved

front driveway for receiving residents and guests by horse-drawn coach. At the back of the home, stretching the entire length of Beck Road to Sheep Lane, was a heavenly landscaped garden with swooping pathways to a pond, a summer house surrounded by trees and a small orchard.

Who lived there? And how did it later become the place where we are now? Our street, Beck Road.

Providence House appears first in the Ordnance Survey Map of 1831. The first records (1841 and 1851 Census) of its inhabitants describe Joseph Davis, a stockbroker, and his wife Priscilla. Living with them are their six children, a governess and two servants. We can imagine the children having great fun in the enormous gardens.

By the late 1850s Joseph and Priscilla had moved on. Piecing together records, imagining how life might have been, and the dreams people had, a provocative story was waiting to be told. Encapsulated in the walls and grounds of Beck Road is a tale of taking refuge, the possibility in alternative being, and of the rewards of one's craft.

It is 1891, the deal has been done.

Josiah Goodman, a builder and lime merchant of Hackney (registered at birth as 'Nonconformist'), has just purchased the land now known as Beck Road from Louis Friedrich Gerhard Stuckenschmidt Esq. Josiah lives with his wife Lucy, 13 children, a governess and two housemaids in a comfortably



## Feature

sized house for them all on Clapton Common. Lucy has built a beautiful interior for them all to enjoy. Being the daughter of a master chair maker, she would, of course, have inherited an eye for careful craftsmanship. Look at her influence in her husband Josiah's choice of building design. The handmade, small glass panes, decorating the top of our front sash windows, are gorgeously alive with colour. They are such a pleasure when you're inside experiencing the light coming through. The floral and leafy carved stone lintels are also to be admired.

Was Josiah also inspired by the well-looked-after garden that was buried to build Beck Road?

### **Providence House = A home manifesting from the foresightful care of a power greater than ourselves.**

A gardener, his wife, their daughter the dress-maker, a cook and a housemaid were all part of the household of Providence House. Living with them was the house and land owner, Eliza Deveau. She bought the house sometime during the 1850s; and was living with her much younger cousin, for companionship and to help manage the estate of 12 cottages at the end facing Sheep Lane, and eight houses with small back and front gardens onto Mare Street.

Here follows part of a true story, along with suppositions and imaginings of Eliza Deveau and her cousin Louis Stuckenschmidt, residents and custodians of Providence House and its land for more than 30 years.

### **Stuckenschmidt = Construction Smith**

Louis Stuckenschmidt was born in 1825 in Bremen, Germany, to Johann, a German shoe-maker and to his mother Sara, from Bethnal Green. Tragically, Louis experienced the terrible pain of losing his mother at just 8 years old.

At 24 years Louis boarded a passenger ship from his home town, Bremen, landing at the Port of London on 5th October 1849. Declaring himself a bookbinder by trade and that he was here for a visit. Exactly one year later to the day, 5th October 1850, Louis travelled again from Bremen, disembarking once more at the Port of London; this time, however, his profession is recorded ... Gent!

He is here to stay.

*Why is Louis here? Is he a revolutionary? One of the waves of 'Forty-Eighters' exiled or fleeing in frustration after the 1849 failed revolution in Germany?*

*Is he simply a young man, dreaming of a brighter life, in a more progressive environment? Is he here to find shelter, needing comfort and security from his mother's family, having missed growing up in her care? Likely one, possibly all, of the above.*

Eliza, with Louis, 31 years her junior, have hatched a plan during his first visit to London that has turned his life around instantaneously, from bookbinder to Victorian Gentleman.

*The concept of the nineteenth-century Gentleman is a complex one. It was not merely a social or class designation. There was also a moral component inherent making it difficult and ambiguous for the Victorians themselves to attempt to define. "The essence of a gentleman," John Ruskin would write, "is what the word says, ... gentleness and sympathy, or kind disposition and fine imagination." Ruskin also maintained that "Gentlemen have to learn that it is no part of their duty or privilege to live on other people's toil;" but many "Gentlemen" did precisely that.*

*And what of Eliza Deveau? Born in Whitechapel to a family of modest means, how did she come to own such a considerable property? Might the clue be in her name? Could we imagine that her late husband was a second generation French Huguenot refugee, a resident of Spitalfields? We could deduce that he was a silk weaver, let's say with particularly developed Protestant ethics, emphasising hard work, discipline and frugality. Making it as an owner of a silk weaving workshop would have absolutely made him a rich man.*

As a 19th century woman it would have taken much courage for Eliza to manage her significant funds. The youthful energy of long-standing bachelor Louis must have been both useful and enchanting. The union works, as we see them living together for the next 20 years.

The early 1870s must have been a stimulating time for them both. Louis is busy creating: engineering a design for improvements to grain landing apparatus for ships, which he submits an application for patent in 1867. Eliza meanwhile is also making her own valuable mark.

In 1871 Eliza courageously hands over part of her home for railway lines. Carrying staves and instruments, men come, to survey and envision beyond the roses and dahlias. New paths are marked out, for two railway lines, that will take passengers along the Liverpool Street to Enfield branch and the Liverpool Street to Chingford branch. Eliza signed the agreement to access in 1871. The lines were finished and in use with astonishing speed by 1872. The gardener, with his wife, continued to be employed for many more years. Mowing the lawn, up to and under the arches that carried the industrious and pleasure-seeking movement of people, was a very important job.

Look at Louis! Sitting back from the summer house, beaming at the thoroughly modern view. His old mate William Meymott Tidy has just returned, along with his new wife, from his life in Bengal, India. They smoke pipes; Louis's is puffing with pride!

Here is the promise of freedom: speed contrasting British constraint. What a gloriously monumental Work of Art he sees! Louis has a sense that he has finally arrived!

### **The Final Chapter**

Eliza dies, at Providence House in October 1878, aged 84 years. It is a devastatingly sad day for Louis. He is indebted to her generosity, her friendship and her care.

Executing her will, he is left with all that she had. The inheritance is their house on Mare Street and a sum amounting to £40,000 (equating to £5,000,000 in 2019).

Louis continues to live in Providence House, alone with three staff for the following six years.

A happy day arrives in 1884, when 58 year old Louis marries 32 year old Hannah Teresa Hartshorne in West Bromwich, Staffordshire. He brings her home, no doubt by train, to Providence House. Three years later their daughter is born, a little girl called Eliza.

Louis spent his final years living in Surrey with his family, having sold the house and gardens spanning Sheep Lane to Mare Street, to a man with a vision. Josiah Goodman built 56 houses to make homes for 112 families. He called it Beck Road. Louis's promise of freedom, the monumental railway arches, still run through it.

Louis Stuckenschmidt died peacefully on New Year's Eve 1901. He was laid to rest beside Eliza Deveau in Highgate Cemetery.

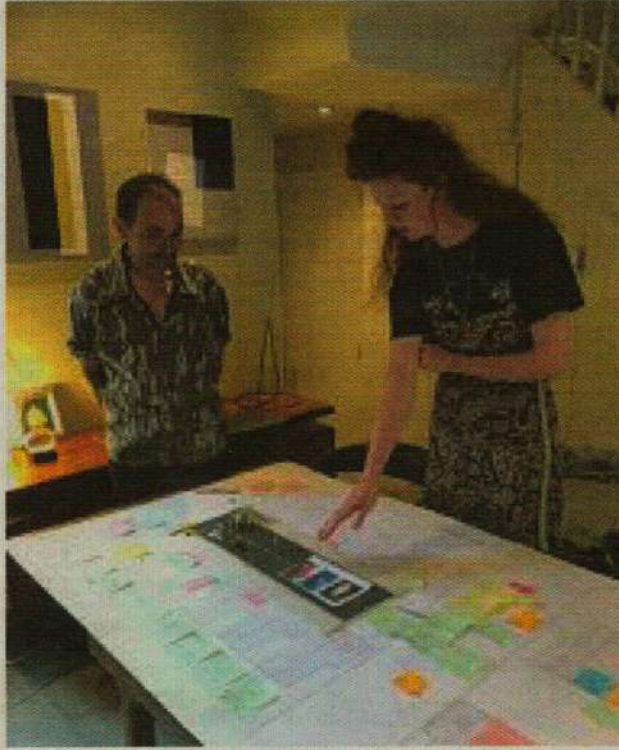
*Words by Leanne Finn-Davis.*



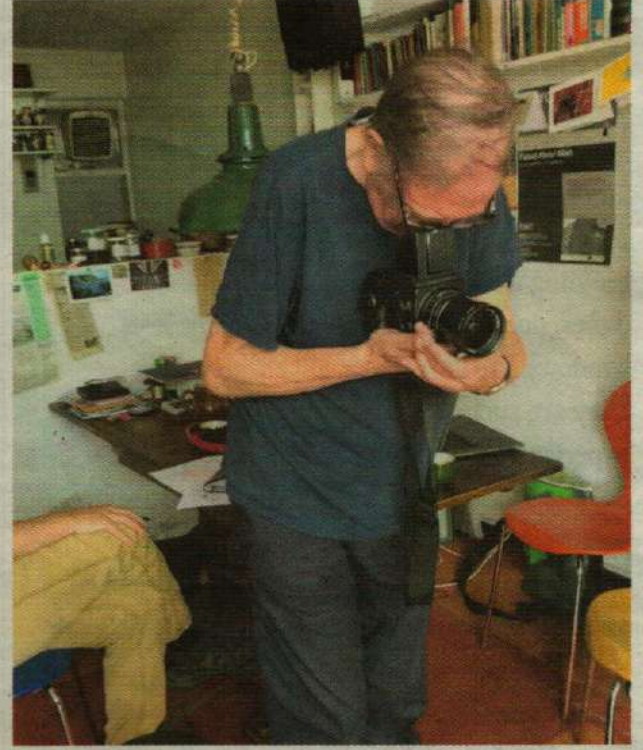
## Making of *By Beck Road*



Edward and Ashley



Adam and Eve



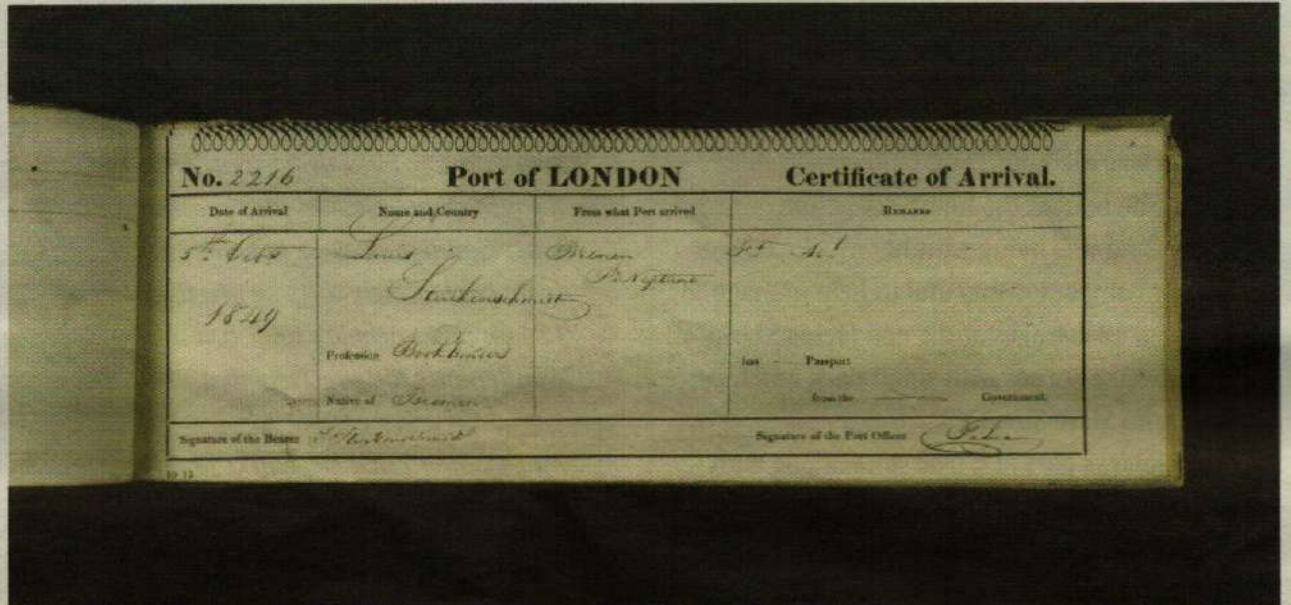
Edward



Hannah and Stephanie

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Louis' landing card



Middlesex Deeds Register



Middlesex Deeds Register

## *By Beck Rd* Exhibition Team

Alastair Carruthers, *Commissioning Curator*  
 Sandhini Poddar, *Project Curator*  
 Dr Kathryn Lovering, *Association of Beck Rd Residents Chair*  
 Stephanie Carlton Smith, *Technical Lead*  
 Caz Hildebrand, *Design Lead*

Alex Merrett, *Print Producer*  
 Louise Reiser, *Security and Consents Adviser*  
 Kim Acland, *Executive Producer*  
 Leanne Finn-Davis, *Historian*  
 Heather Whitbread, *Census Graphic Designer*



# Artwork

Clas Oldenburg

Oldenburg speaks infrequently and well. 'I am a magician. A magician brings dead things to life.' As per his manifesto, he is an artist who vanishes, an Andy Warhol in reverse, a standing reproach to fifteen minutes of fame. Quietly sophisticated and highly educated, he is a textbook case of the Pop art vision – the Pop art vibe and the Pop art jive. 'All I need is for something to stick in my mind. Like Henry Miller's nose. It has a strange, puffy quality. Then it begins to work within a scheme of resemblances. The nose metamorphoses into a fireplug; the plug into a coin phone box; the phone into a car.' His manifesto is a glorious fusion of Whitman and Dada.

\*\*\*

I am for an art that is political-~~erotic~~-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.

I am for an art that grows up not knowing it is art at all, an art ~~given~~ the chance of having a starting point of zero.

I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap & still comes out on top.

I am for an art that imitates the human, that is comic, if necessary, ~~or violent~~, or whatever is necessary.

I am for all art that takes its form from the lines of life itself, ~~that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and~~ stupid as life itself.

I am for an artist who vanishes, turning up in a white cap painting signs or hallways.

I am for art ~~that comes out of a chimney like black hair and scatters~~ in the sky.

I am for art ~~that spills out of an old man's purse when he is bounced~~ off a passing fender.

I am for the art ~~out of a dog's mouth, falling five stories from the roof.~~

I am for the art that a kid licks, ~~after peeling away the wrapper.~~

I am for an art that joggles like everyone's knees, when the bus traverses an excavation.

I am for art ~~that is smoked, like a cigarette, smells, like a pair of shoes~~

I am for art ~~that flaps like a flag, or helps blow noses, like a handkerchief.~~

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"I am for an Art revisited"

Emily Masters, 2019



# Artwork

## *I Am for an Art*

I am for art that is put on and taken off, like pants, which develops holes, like socks, which is eaten, like a piece of pie, or abandoned with great contempt, like a piece of shit.

I am for art covered with bandages. I am for art that limps and rolls and runs and jumps. I am for art that comes in a can or washes up on the shore.

I am for art that coils and grunts like a wrestler. I am for art that sheds hair.

I am for art you can sit on. I am for art you can pick your nose with or stub your toes on.

I am for art from a pocket, from deep channels of the ear, from the edge of a knife, from the corners of the mouth, stuck in the eye or worn on the wrist.

I am for art under the skirts, and the art of pinching cockroaches.

I am for the art of conversation between the sidewalk and a blind man's metal stick.

I am for the art that grows in a pot, that comes down out of the skies at night, like lightning, that hides in the clouds and growls. I am for art that is flipped on and off with a switch.

I am for art that unfolds like a map, that you can squeeze, like your sweetys arm, or kiss, like a pet dog. Which expands and squeaks, like an accordion, which you can spill your dinner on, like an old tablecloth.

I am for an art that you can hammer with, stitch with, sew with, paste with, file with.

I am for an art that tells you the time of day, or where such and such a street is.

I am for an art that helps old ladies across the street.

I am for the art of the washing machine. I am for the art of a government check. I am for the art of last wars raincoat.

I am for the art that comes up in fogs from sewer-holes in winter. I am for the art that splits when you step on a frozen puddle. I am for the worms art inside the apple. I am for the art of sweat that develops between crossed legs.

I am for the art of neck-hair and caked tea-cups, for the art between the tines of restaurant forks, for the odour of boiling dishwater.



# Artwork

Chris Oldenburg

I am for the art of sailing on Sunday, and the art of red and white gasoline pumps.

I am for the art of bright blue factory columns and blinking biscuit signs.

I am for the art of cheap plaster and enamel. I am for the art of worn marble and smashed slate. I am for the art of rolling cobblestones and sliding sand. I am for the art of slag and black coal. I am for the art of dead birds.

I am for the art of scratchings in the asphalt, daubing at the walls. I am for the art of bending and kicking metal and breaking glass, and pulling at things to make them fall down.

I am for the art of punching and skinned knees and sat-on bananas. I am for the art of kids smells. I am for the art of mama-babble.

I am for the art of bar-babble, tooth-picking, beer-drinking, egg-salting, and salting. I am for the art of falling off a barstool.

I am for the art of underwear and the art of taxicabs. I am for the art of ice-cream cones dropped on concrete. I am for the majestic art of dog-turds, rising like cathedrals.

I am for the blinking arts, lighting up the night. I am for art falling, splashing, wiggling, jumping, going on and off.

I am for the art of fat truck-tyres and black eyes.

I am for Kool-art, 7-UP art, Pepsi-art, Sunshine art, 39 cents art, 15 cents art, Vatronol art, Dro-bomb art, Vani art, Menthol art, L & M art, Ex-lax art, Venida art, Heaven Hill art, Pamryl art, San-o-med art, Ra art, 9.99 art, Now art, New art, How art, Fire sale art, Last Chance art, Only art, Diamond art, Tomorrow art, Franks art, Ducks art, Meat-o-rama art.

I am for the art of bread wet by rain. I am for the rat's dance between floors.

I am for the art of flies walking on a slick pear in the electric light. I am for the art of soggy onions and firm green shoots. I am for the art of clicking among the nuts when the roaches come and go. I am for the brown sad art of rotting apples.

I am for the art of meowls and cluster of cats and for the art of their dumb electric eyes.

I am for the white art of refrigerators and their muscular openings and closings.

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"I am for an Art revisited"

Emily Masters, 2019



# Artwork

## *I Am for an Art*

I am for the art of rust and mould. I am for the art of hearts, funeral hearts or sweetheart hearts, full of nougat. I am for the art of worn uncathooks and singing barrels of red, white, blue and yellow meat.

I am for the art of things lost or thrown away, coming home from school. I am for the art of cork and ball trees and flying cows and the noise of rectangles and squares. I am for the art of crayons and weak grey pencil-lead, and grainy wash and sticky oil paint, and the art of windshield wipers and the art of the finger on a cold window, on dusty steel or in the bubbles on the sides of a bathtub.

I am for the art of teddy bears and guns and decapitated rabbits, exploded umbrellas, raped beds, chairs with their brown bones broken, burning trees, firecracker ends, chicken bones, pigeon bones and bones with men sleeping in them.

I am for the art of slightly rotten funeral flowers, hung bloody rabbits and wrinkly yellow chickens, bass drums & tambourines, and plastic phonographs.

I am for the art of abandoned boxes, tied like pharsons. I am for an art of watertanks and speeding clouds and flapping shades.

I am for US Government Inspected Art, Grade A art, Regular Price art, Yellow Ripe art, Extra Fancy art, Ready-to-eat art, Best-for-less art, Ready-to-cook art, Fully cleaned art, Spend Less art, Eat Better art, Ham art, pork art, chicken art, tomato art, banana art, apple art, turkey art, cake art, cookie art.

add:

I am for an art that is combed down, that is hung from each ear, that is laid on the lips and under the eyes, that is shaved from the legs, that is brushed on the teeth, that is fixed on the thighs, that is slipped on the foot.

square which becomes blobby

*"I am for an Art revisited"*

Emily Masters, 2019



# Crossword



## Across

- 1 Collection of houses (6)
- 4 Not being closed (4)
- 5 Television's first channel (3)
- 8 Those that watch (8)
- 10 To express (5)
- 11 Roman support structure (4)
- 13 Residence (5)
- 16 Progeny (4)
- 18 Endeavour (3)
- 19 Nuclear unit (6)
- 20 About the past (7)
- 21 An exhibition venue for hire (3)
- 22 A passage (4)
- 23 Way of making (6)
- 24 Artists' housing organization (4)
- 25 Creative individuals (7)

## Down

- 2 Facts as truth (8)
- 3 Suggests action (2)
- 5 Beer brand (4)
- 6 Serious problem (6)
- 7 Bring together with energy (9)
- 9 People coming together (9)
- 12 A telling (5)
- 14 Get behind (7)
- 15 Artists at work (8)
- 17 Creative space (6)
- 21 Change to fit (5)
- 22 Cost of accommodation (4)

D4001'S

Beck Road Visitor Centre and Gift Shop

Featuring:

Clara Potaito

Galina Munroe

For Fans Only

Anna Howard

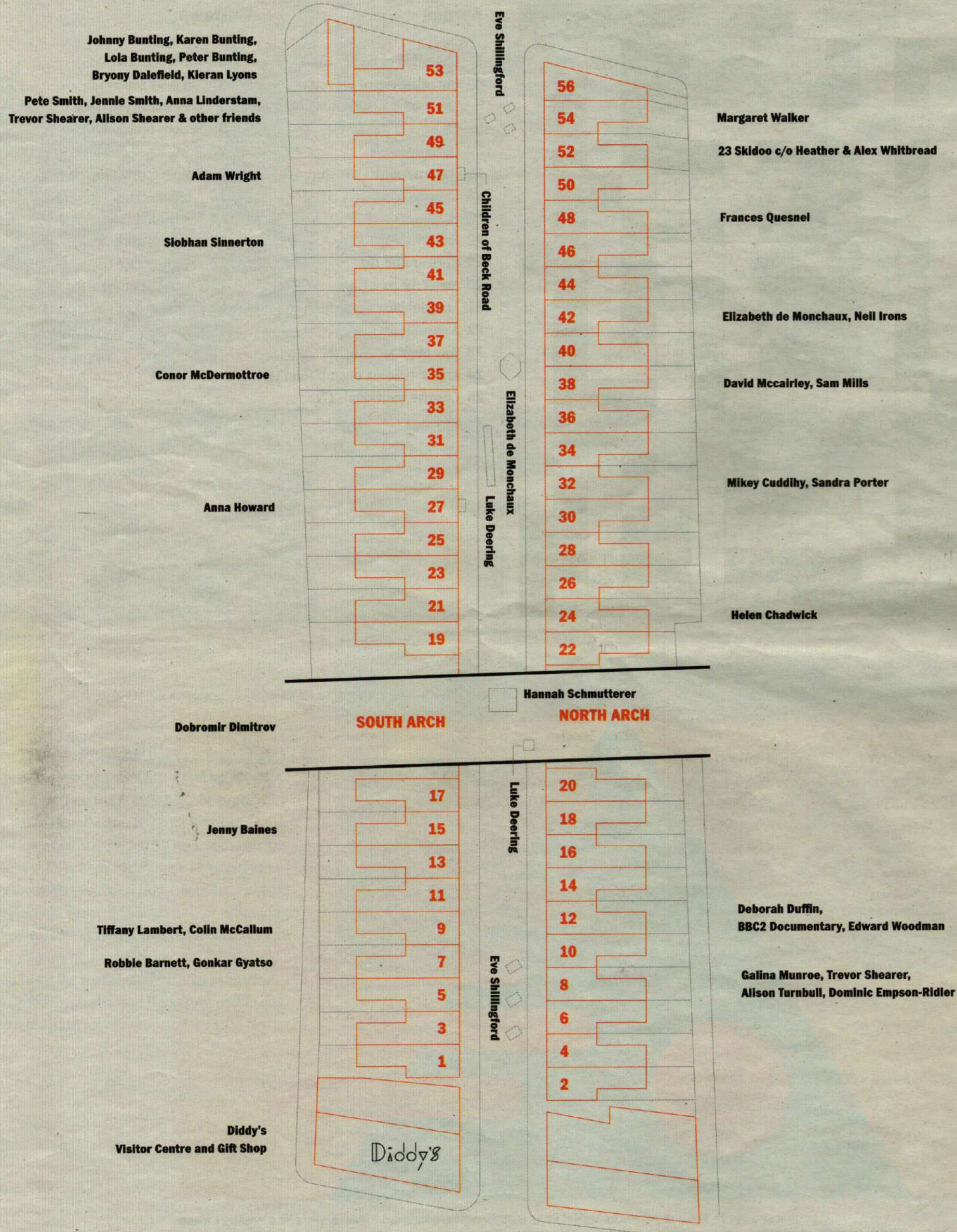
Dom Ridler

Eve Shillingford

ACROSS 1 Street, 4 Open, 5 BBC, 8 Audience, 10 Emote, 11 Arch, 13 House, 16 Kids, 18 Try, 19 Family, 20 History, 21 Air, 22 Road, 23 Create, 24 ACME, 25 Artists  
DOWN 2 Evidence, 3 To, 5 Beck, 6 Crisis, 7 Galvanize, 9 Community, 12 Story, 14 Support, 15 Practice, 17 Studio, 21 Adapt, 22 Rent



# Exhibition Map





# Exhibition Map

Name	Venue	Beck Road	Artistic Medium
23 Skidoo	52	Former Resident	Music
Jenny Baines	15	Current Resident	Filmmaker, Photographer, Professor
Robbie Barnett	7	Current Resident	Theatrical Performer, Professor
BBC2	12	"Open Space: Artists in Residence"	Documentary, 1988
Johnny Bunting	53, 9	Former Resident	Painter, Sculptor
Karen Bunting	53	Current Resident	Ceramicist
Lola Bunting	53	Former Resident	Artist, Curator
Peter Bunting	53	Current Resident	Painter
Helen Chadwick	24	Former Resident (Deceased)	Artist
Mikey Cuddihy	32	Former Resident	Artist
Bryony Dalefield	53	Former Resident	Textile Artist
Luke Deering	Outdoors	Current Resident	Sculptor
Elizabeth de Monchaux	Outdoors, 42	Former Resident	Sculptor
JAKe Detonator	Outdoors	Current Resident	Graphic Artist, Author
Dobromir Dimitrov	South Arch	Studio Artist	Painter
Deborah Duffin	12	Former Resident	Artist
Dominic Empson-Ridler	8	Studio Artist, Supported by Diddy's	Artist
Gonkar Gyatso	7	Former Resident	Artist
Anna Howard	27	Studio Artist, Supported by Diddy's	Artist, Curator
Neil Irons	Outdoors, 42	Former Resident	Painter
Tiffany Lambert	9	Studio Artist	Painter
Anna Linderstam	51	Former Resident	Artist
Kieran Lyons	53	Former Resident	Artist
Emily Masters	Newspaper	Supported by Diddy's	Artist
David Mccairley	38	Current Resident	Photographer
Colin McCallum	9	Studio Artist	Painter
Conor McDermottroe	35	Current Resident	Filmmaker
Samuel Mills	38	Studio Artist	Painter
Galina Munroe	8	Supported by Diddy's	Painter
Sandra Porter	32	Former Resident	Painter
Frances Quesnel	48	Current Resident	Artist
Hannah Schmutterer	Outdoors	Studio Artist	Artist
Trevor Shearer	51, 8	Former Resident (Deceased)	Artist
Eve Shillingford	Outdoors	Supported by Alastair Carruthers and Diddy's	Artist
Siobhan Sinnerton	43	Current Resident	Film Producer
Jennie Smith	51	Current Resident	Designer
Pete Smith	51	Current Resident	Painter
Clara Tait	Diddy's	Supported by Diddy's	Ceramicist
Alison Turnbull	51, 8	Former Resident	Artist
Margaret Walker	54	Current Resident	Sculptor
Alex Whitbread	52	Current Resident	Architect
Heather Whitbread	52	Current Resident	Designer
Edward Woodman	12	Collaborator	Photographer
Adam Wright & Children of Beck Road	47	Current Residents	Engineer & Artists



## Features

## AGONY AUNT

Ask Sandhini

**Sandhini Poddar (MA MA MA) is a qualified curator and art shrink who has been working with artists and artist estates for the past 17 years. She provides firefighting skills, diplomacy dealing with the strop, deep art historical insights, and helpful doses of get real. Sandhini is the Project Curator for BBR19 and is available for therapy on weekdays up on Hampstead Heath.**

**Q:** Who do you curate for?

**A:** The public.

**Q:** What do you mean by the public?

**A:** Everyone.

**Q:** What does *By Beck Road 19* mean to you?

**A:** It's a celebration of art and artists; a way to take the reins back on creative production. It's about artistic citizenship in contemporary society.

Beck Road has a living history that can be traced back to 1671. Over the past 350 years, the area has been a site of civic dissent and inspired leadership, as well as extraordinary artisanal and contemporary art production. Populated in its earlier history by courageous figures who contributed to East London's urban planning and sanitation works, the road's more recent narratives are bound to feminist resistance and creative entrepreneurship. The artists who have lived here since the late 1970s have survived (and in a few cases, excelled) against the odds; witnesses to rapidly changing economic frameworks, escalating real estate prices, and

bullish art market developments.

**Q:** Who regulates the art market?

**A:** A handful of blue-chip galleries. The equivalent of a black hole that sucks up all the energy around it.

**Q:** What kinds of artists do they represent?

**A:** For the most part, you have to either be dead, almost dead, a woman who's just being discovered, or incredibly young.

**Q:** Some people say they wish the art world was like it used to be. What did it used to be like?

**A:** It's never been a single "art world". It has always contained many worlds. These worlds were perhaps more courageous, more fun, less self-conscious and more world-conscious. Elitism kills creativity and naturalism.



Artist Maggie Walker's garden on Beck Road

Through ACME, which provided subsidised live-work spaces, several artists on Beck Road first inhabited spaces that had been previously squatted in and found themselves facing severely

derelict and shambolic living conditions (no electricity, no bathrooms, floorboards burnt for warmth, etc). Through their resilience, skill, ingenuity and inherent creativity, they have transformed these spaces into their homes, studios, and gardens.

"Artists have a creative attitude to life", says artist Debbie Duffin, who returned to Beck Road this August after having to vacate her Beck Road home in 1996. When BBC2 made a documentary titled, "Open Space: Artists in Residence" in November 1987 as part of a collective effort to try to raise funds for the artists to purchase their homes, she stated, "Some of the most important things in life are not easy to explain – for example, love! We all accept it exists; we don't try to understand it, we enjoy it — why can't this approach be taken to abstract art?" Here she is watching herself being interviewed in that original documentary, sitting beside *By Beck Road 19* commissioning curator Alastair Carruthers.



**Q:** Where did artists train back then?

**A:** Apart from art colleges, polytechnics around the UK gave students from working-class families the opportunity to become artists and provided them with a range of explorative materials.

**Q:** Where did artists from the East End show their art in the city?

**A:** ACME's gallery in Covent Garden, as well as AIR Gallery and the Whitechapel Open Studios were important platforms, apart from more mainstream commercial galleries. Maureen Paley's Interim Art, which started on Beck Road, was an early incubator for British and international art.

In the BBC2 documentary, former resident artist Helen Chadwick (1953–1996) states, "It (Beck Road) gives you an option of resisting the



## Features

market. Perhaps producing work that might be more experimental, that might sit outside the commercial structures. It's a kind of freedom, but the freedom is reliant on a low-cost place to live and work." Over time, artists on the road formed their own support structure, making life-long friends, caring for each other's children, and trying to safeguard against vandalism on the street. Many had to seek part-time jobs as art tutors in various colleges to support their livelihood as artists. Some had lodgers who were themselves dissidents and immigrants, seeking refuge in the city.

One of the most important narratives to emerge for the curators has been the extraordinary story of the lives and practices of many women artists who either lived on Beck Road or were supported by activities on the street such as Karen Bunting, Helen Chadwick, Hannah Collins, Mikey Cuddihy, Bryony Dalefield, Phyllis Mahon, Elizabeth de Monchaux, Debbie Duffin, Alexis Hunter, Frances Quesnel, Sandra Porter, Alison Turnbull, Anna Walker, Maggie Walker, and others. Their legacy continues in the work of younger artists such as Jenny Baines, Lola Bunting (and her gallery space 53 Beck Road), Anna Howard, Tiffany Lambert, Emily Masters, Galina Munroe, Hannah Schmutterer, and Eve Shillingford and the entrepreneurship of Diddy Varley (of Diddy's café).

*By Beck Road 19* is a genre-breaking art exhibition that spans all 167 meters of Beck Road. Apart from residential spaces, which have been generously opened to the curators, the exhibition occupies several outdoor spaces, such as the beautiful railway arch that bisects the street, as well as pavements and facades. Over forty participating artists, cartoonists, and filmmakers, showcasing drawings, prints, paintings, sculptures, ceramics, 16mm films, and Virtual Reality environments, have come together for this unique event. Many homes are owned by householders with little or no experience of contemporary art. They have participated through a shared sense of curiosity and community. Sitting outside established paradigms of supporting and exhibiting art, *By Beck Road 19* is a celebration of artistic and curatorial autonomy. Through self-mobilisation and collaboration, it aims to energise a large community of artists and art lovers in the area and beyond.

**Q:** What do artists want to achieve through this exhibition?

**A:** Many have said, a new audience for their work.

Some haven't shown their work for several decades and are seeking to reconnect with their practices. They need galvanizing. Everyone needs support.

"Artist Willem de Kooning said, 'There's a train track in the history of art that goes way back to Mesopotamia ... something like that. I want my place on that train, even if it's in a smelly boxcar like a hobo', says resident artist Pete Smith.

"I would like people to realise that Beck Road is still a street of creatives and not just a desirable location in an estate agent's window. The legacy of artists who have lived and practised on Beck Road is a contemporary consideration too; we need to (re)gain a sense of community", says resident artist Jenny Baines.



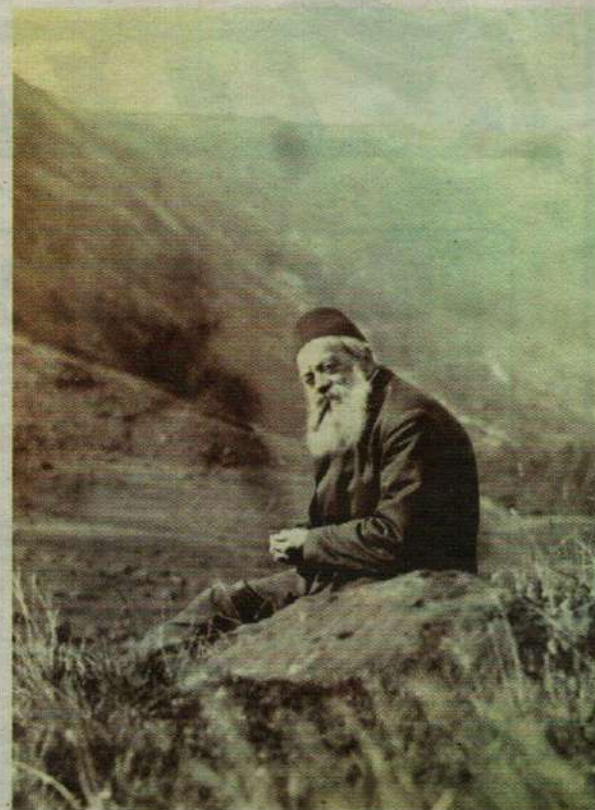
Artist Pete Smith's studio on Beck Road

How does artistic creativity survive when cultural infrastructure and patronage in contemporary society is very restrictive? How can these limited avenues enable and sustain the immense scale and diversity of artistic production and imagination? They can't, and that's the truth of London. Several artists complain about sky-rocketing studio rents that literally castrate their potential to produce in the city, with a majority moving either to zones 5 and 6, other towns and cities around the UK or to continental Europe. "If you want a comfortable, secure life, being an artist has to be one of the worst ways to go about it. No one who came to Beck Road was under any illusions", says narrator Philip Stanley in the BBC documentary. The insecurity around property seems to be a leitmotif that runs from the 1970s to the present day.

*By Beck Road 19* is both a platform for advocacy as well as a mobilization of existing and new networks. It has enabled an excavation of past archives and an investigation into current practices and will hopefully offer possibilities for the future.

## JOSEPH BECK

**The man who lost his tongue but carried on speaking**



It is believed that local hero Joseph Beck was the most likely inspiration for the naming of our home, Beck Road.

An optician and local councillor, he initiated in 1884 an impressively determined campaign to save Clissold Park in neighbouring Stoke Newington, one of the last remaining open spaces in Hackney.

Beck was deeply concerned about the frightening effects of "the march of bricks and mortar" through London on public health. Fresh air, sunlight and free space to wander and connect with nature, he believed, was one of the crucial antidotes to cholera outbreaks and endemic smallpox infections.

He fought vociferously, raising £80,000 (the equivalent of £10 million) to fund the long campaign, purchase the privately-owned land and transform it into a public park. His strength for the cause was truly indefatigable. Despite developing cancer of the tongue during the campaign and having half of his tongue surgically removed, Beck continued to fight and speak at meetings, so that, in his own words, "Children could take their first steps on the grass of Clissold Park and play under the sun." Clissold Park was opened in 1889. Thank you, Joseph Beck!

Words by Leanne Finn-Davis.



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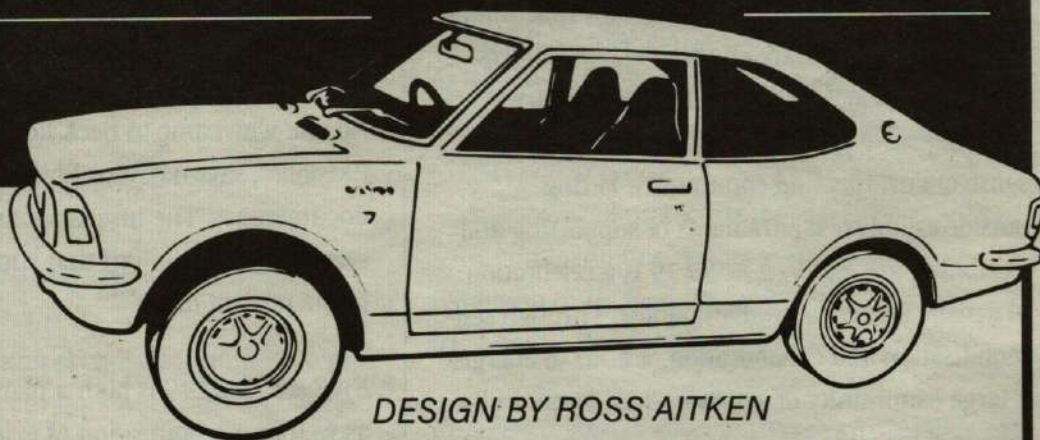
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